



## In memoriam

### Professor Marcello Spanó (1954-2017)

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## IN MEMORIAM: PROFESSOR MARCELLO SPANÓ (1954-2017)

Sorrowful message from the Editors of the journal *Roczniki Panstwowego Zakladu Higieny – Annals of the National Institute of Hygiene*.

In January 2017 we lost Professor Marcello Spanó, Member of the International Scientific Board of our journal. Professor Marcello Spanó held the position of senior scientist in the Laboratory of Toxicology, Unit of Radiation Biology and Human Health, ENEA (Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development), Casaccia Research Center, Rome, Italy.

Below there is 'In memory' note written by his friends and colleagues.

### In memory of Marcello Spanó



Whilst conversating with his research team at ENEA in Rome, Marcello Spanó was hit by cardiac arrest, and died at the hospital without regaining conscience few days later - on January 19, 2017.

The meaningless death of Marcello at an age of 62 is a terrible loss for his family, his research team and collaborators at ENEA in Rome and all his colleagues and friends in a large international network of researchers.

Marcello figured out at an early stage that a laboratory method to measure DNA damage in spermatozoa, the so called Sperm Chromatin Structure Assay (SCSA), had a great potential in research as well as in clinical practice. He established a collaboration with US scientist Professor Don Evenson, who invented this assay and got it to work at his Lab at ENEA in Rome. Subsequently Marcello's Lab has played a major role in numerous epidemiological and experimental studies throughout Europe addressing toxic effects on male reproductive function by chemicals in our environment. Of major importance it turned out

that the SCSA parameter called DFI (DNA Fragmentation Index) is an independent predictor of male fertilizing potential and therefore has become an important part of diagnostics in infertility make-up. During the past few years Marcello and his team has worked hard to develop and implement techniques to look into epigenetic changes in the human male genome in spermatozoa. He was brutally taken away just when this work was hoped to provide new important insight into male reproductive function and its susceptibility to environmental chemicals.

However, Marcello was not only a great scientist but also a humanist with profound interest in literature, travels and ancient as well as modern history and politics. His ability to communicate with other people and to create social relationships was remarkable. Perhaps, because he was an excellent listener. In human relations understanding was much more important than judging, the progress and performance of the group more important than that of the individual. Marcello insisted on scientific integrity and high standards and never was tempted to harvest publicity from premature or preliminary research results.

Marcello was a great friend and fan of Scandinavia which he showed, not only by scientific collaboration and by helping colleagues at Lund University with setting up and running SCSA. He also learned to speak and read Swedish by taking lessons at the Swedish Church in Rome. Many of his e-mails and SMSs sent to his Nordic friends were written in – close to perfect – Swedish.

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Although research was an important part of his life, he also appreciated his leisure time, which he spent by meeting family, friends, reading, travelling and watercolor painting.

Marcello was a very unique person – both as researcher, colleague and friend. His early death is a tremendous loss to science, colleagues at ENEA and his large international collaborative research network. We will miss Marcello's ever supporting back-up, his optimistic and humoristic approach to life and partnerships, his patience and understanding, a real friend one could always rely on.

*Jens Peter Bonde and Aleksander Giwercman*

February, 2017